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ADDRESS

BY

B. PLATT CARPENTER,

AT THE

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION,

AT

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y.,

ON THE

FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1876.

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A D D R E S S .

Mr. President and Fellow-Citizens :

ON the fourth day of July, one hundred years ago, thirteen sparsely populated colonies, acting through their representatives in general Congress assembled, and publishing to the world a statement of the causes that impelled the separation, absolved their allegiance to the British Crown, and declared themselves free and independent states. In commemoration of that event, the most important in the history of civil government, forty millions of people, embraced within the domain of the United States of America, join to-day in national jubilee. At the dividing line between the century that has chronicled the birth, the trials and the greatness of the Republic, and the one now opening bright with promise, a review of the past shall be alike the source of pleasurable emotions and of beneficial lessons for guidance in the future.

The system of government which our forefathers established was not the result of foolhardy experiment. Men of intelligence and reflection are not apt to pledge their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor merely from caprice or in a spasm of temerity. They calculated the operation of moral forces, from data supposed to be trustworthy, with the same precision with which the astronomer predicts an eclipse. The effect of political causes may be foretold

with approximate accuracy by those conversant with public affairs, and with the motives and influences that prompt men to a particular course in a given state of circumstances, and in so far as intelligence and judgment are wanting in the projector, to that extent failure marks the desired consummation.

The colonists entered upon the great revolutionary struggle with a common purpose and a united effort. There was an amalgamation of distinct tastes and divergent opinions into an homogeneous whole. The three millions of people who established their right to self-government, drew their inspiration from Plymouth Rock, the banks of the James and the mouth of the Hudson, and represented the austerity, the chivalry and the steadfastness of our early American ancestry. Fugitives from religious intolerance in the land of their nativity, a little band of pilgrims, bringing firm convictions and a dauntless courage, sought in the new world freedom of worship. They realized the fruition of their hopes as to religious freedom, but long enslaved by hereditary narrowness they failed to extend it to others. Time, however, with its changes and compensations has finally established, at the very base of Plymouth Rock, a liberalism that scarcely exists elsewhere upon the continent. Whether this be the outgrowth of the early professions which seem inconsistent with the practice of the puritans, it is not our province to inquire. The spirit of independence that caused them to be dissenters in the Church would naturally lead them to rebel against injustice in the State. The colonists upon the James were led by the spirit of adventure, and the anticipated gains of commerce, to the wilds of the West. They never complained of religious intolerance at their old home, nor exercised it at the new.

They were satisfied with a monarchy in Great Britain, and did not seek a republic in America. Their system of home government could neither partake of the nature of a hierarchy, nor be civilly oppressive to a people surrounded by all that was free. Midway, both in location and in doctrine, between these two extremes were the Dutch settlers of the Hudson river valley. Their phlegmatic temperament would enable them to endure a monarchy or enjoy a republic. Prudent and industrious, they made the strip of country which they inhabited a territory of unexampled prosperity. Thus, from three small settlements between the years 1607 and 1620 — *nuclei* of the renowned cluster that dotted the land — sprang colonists that, after one hundred and fifty years of rapid increase, notwithstanding the frequent decimation of their ranks in the aboriginal and French wars, wrested constitutional liberty from one of the most formidable military powers on the globe. They had, however, received the severest discipline in the school of actual experience. Their muscles had been hardened by toil to great endurance. Their minds, not enervated through excesses, had been stored with facts and principles. Their spirits had been nurtured to bravery by the necessary tutelage of their surroundings, so that in personal qualifications they could compensate for the lack both of military drill and the most approved equipments of war. They could look back to history and learn from example that an intelligent people struggling for right always outnumber a much larger force of aggressors ; and they felt that through the righteousness of their cause the battle was half won.

The declaration of independence was a clear and candid statement of grievances which the colonists had endured, and of rights which they asserted. It was occasioned by

oppressive taxation, the enforcement of unusual penalties, and a denial of participation in government to which implicit obedience was demanded ; although lying deeper as a cause, inasmuch as it contravened principles dear to the American heart and stripped man of his manhood, was the bold enunciation of the doctrine that "Parliament had a right to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever." The colonists held, by right of possession and by conquest from the original barbarous occupants, territory to which the mother country could not present a superior claim of discovery. While content to be treated as dependencies, and expecting ever to be faithful allies of the British Crown, they were unwilling to occupy the position of vassals. By reason of hardships imposed they were forced to anticipate an event which, through natural causes operating concurrently with the kindest treatment, would have been inevitable in half a century. It is absurd to suppose that a continent, beaming with intelligence and zealous for progress, should forever remain subject to a small island of the sea. Nature had peculiarly fitted North America for independent empire. With every resource of material productiveness and healthful climate, a cultured race of inhabitants could soon become self sustaining, and eventually defy the world with their power.

No body of men had ever been charged with weightier responsibilities than those which rested upon the immortal Colonial Congress, assembled for deliberation at Philadelphia, in 1776. Eighteen months had elapsed since Massachusetts had been declared in rebellion. The voice of Chatham, of Burke, and of Camden, had been heard pleading eloquently, but in vain, for justice to the colonies. The bloody sacrifice at Lexington and Concord had spread its

incense throughout the land and roused to instant activity a determined people, till then slumbering upon their rights. Ticonderoga had surrendered both her fortress and her treasure of supplies at the summons of the indomitable Allen. The battle ground of Bunker Hill, sanctified by the blood of the peerless Warren, was of itself an enduring monument of the superiority of ill-equipped provincials over the gayly-caparisoned British regulars. Already the war had been carried beyond the confines of the colonies, and the valiant Montgomery, successful at Montreal, had fallen in the disaster at Quebec. The Carolinas had been encouraged to renewed vigor by the magnificent repulse of the British at Fort Moultrie. Already alarmed at unexpected resistance the King had sought to enforce his tyranny by employing the military power of the Duke of Brunswick, and hiring conscripts from the sordid landgrave of Hesse Cassel. Already the floating property of the patriots had been declared confiscated, and Congress, in April, had virtually asserted the independence of the colonies by opening their commerce to the world and abolishing the British custom houses. From the 7th day of June, when Richard Henry Lee offered the celebrated resolution, "That these colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states," a continuing scene of grandeur was enacted in Independence Hall, culminating in the adoption of the great declaration. The renown that shall cling to the names of the actors in that scene shall be more enduring than the parchment upon which the history of their deeds is written, or the marble upon which the event is inscribed. John Adams, taking the lead in debate, pleaded for immediate independence with an eloquence as vehement and irresistible as that which, pouring torrent-like from the lips of

Demosthenes, had nerved the Athenians to a last struggle against Philip, while by his side, with equal boldness and fervor, stood Lee and Rutledge, Jefferson, Franklin, and the vigorous John Hancock. It is not strange that deliberation should have preceded the 2d of July. Every breast was animated with the same noble spirit and the same determination to resist tyranny. There is always a time to deliberate, and a time to strike, and well may caution be exercised before risking life upon a single blow. Within a year there had been a general disclaimer of intention to separate from Great Britain. There had been no complaint as to the form of government, and until within a few months no expressed desire for independence. Petition and remonstrance having proved alike unavailing, a step had been taken from which the colonists could recede neither with honor nor with safety. To encourage the patriots was the example of the barons wresting from the despicable King John the great charter of English liberty. They had read of John Hampden and his noble compeers, whose resistance to the avarice of Charles I. had led to the commonwealth. A century had not passed since the blood of Sidney and Russell had stirred a popular feeling that resulted in the revolution of 1688, and the bill of rights from the re-established house of Stuart. They were not unmindful of the successful struggle of the Seven United Provinces against the power of Spain, and the fruit of their sanguinary resistance to Louis XIV. Little Switzerland, freed from the domination of the house of Hapsburgh, had been for over four hundred years a confederate republic. In addition to the teachings of history, almost every colony had declared for independence. On the other hand, in point of numbers and resources, the contest seemed unequal. It was the opinion

of some that suffering should be endured until the preponderance of the world's sympathy should add moral weight to the cause. To others it seemed indispensable that an alliance should be perfected with the natural enemies of the British Crown, and that France should be committed to our support. The kindly interest of Vergennes, and the pleasant predictions of Turgot, had led them to expect aid from France and Spain through Louis XVI. and Charles III. The result of all the discussion was unanimity on the part of those acting, the more remarkable and praiseworthy as the latest advices from Gen. Washington had depicted the deplorable condition of the army. The record of their judgment, given form and comeliness by the pen of Jefferson, and approved, without dissent, on the 4th day of July, created a new power among the nations. A name was given to Republican America to be known in all lands, and a flag to protect her commerce on all seas. Thus treaties could be made, alliances formed, and commerce regulated by a political organization, worthy of recognition and competent to contract. On the 15th day of November, 1777, after the gloomiest period of the revolution, the articles of confederation were adopted by Congress, subject to ratification by the States. Then, after the varied successes and vicissitudes of war, the triumph of American arms was assured by the surrender of Cornwallis, on the 19th day of October, 1781. The final treaty of peace was signed at Paris on the 3d day of September, 1783, and on the 4th day of March, 1789, the federal constitution, under which the republic has grown to its present greatness, became the supreme law of the land. For the adoption of that constitution, agreed upon as the compromise of various plans, the gratitude of mankind is largely due to Hamilton, Madison and Jay. Thus,

in the brief space of twenty years, resistance to unjust taxation had enlisted a people, desiring neither a change of government nor of rulers, and hurried them on to revolution, independence and republicanism. Only a republican form of government could be satisfactory to the people. The name of King suggested George III.; of Emperor, a standing army and ruinous taxation; of President elected for life, only another name for monarchical authority. The corner stone of the new government was the equality of all men under the law, and especial rights and privileges to none. The step from independent nationality to independent citizenship was natural and inevitable. Here was incorporated into law the substance of liberty that an Athenian archon or a Roman consul had never dreamed of, nor soothsayer of any age predicted.

A nation unlike the sun, never rises nor sets without a struggle. In the case of the new born republic by the result only could it be determined whether Great Britain was an unnatural mother, or the colonies undutiful children, and in the eyes of the world success vindicated the right of the latter to all they had claimed. Washington was elevated to the highest position of state. He had carried the American cause to triumph, and now in peace was the Solon and the Aristides of civil government, as he had been both the Fabius and the Scipio in arms. The American army, that with a rash or timid commander would have melted under the rays of the first summer sun, was preserved by his judgment and grew under his protection. Never drawing his sword for conquest nor through personal ambition, but battling only for the defense or establishment of right, his career lacked no capstone to complete the pyramid of its glory. Other conquerors had rested with sullied fame or a divided

people. Those who had sought glory through blood had suddenly paused before the pinnacle was reached. Hannibal, neglecting to complete his conquest after the bloody field of Cannæ, permitted good fortune to escape and died by his own hand in a foreign country. Cæsar, about to be crowned monarch of almost the known world, was assassinated in the senate chamber. Charles XII, invincible in arms as in ambition, finally met his Pultowa. Washington, superior to them all, retired with the affections of his countrymen, the esteem of mankind, and with a name upon which glows the world's brightest lustre. The future historian shall say of him that he was the greatest man of any age or country. With Washington as the central figure, other names were not wanting to constitute an inimitable cluster. Even the women sacrificed affection to patriotism, as many a mother, with only such jewels as Cornelia possessed, sent forth her son with the Spartan injunction to return with his shield, or upon it. France, from whatever cause, contributed much, and not least, the noblest soul in all her realm, who occupies near to Washington a place in the hearts of the American people, and the liberty-loving portion of monarchical Europe shall ever be entitled to thanks for Lafayette, Kosciuszko and Steuben.

National independence, thus achieved, was soon to undergo a severe trial. Within twenty years after the complete formation of the republic, the British orders in council had driven our commerce from the seas, and were rapidly unmanning the American navy. The depression to enterprise and repeated insults to national dignity becoming intolerable, in June, 1812, war was declared against Great Britain, and the questions to be decided were, whether an American vessel in free waters was part of our national

domain, and whether the flag of the Republic should protect its floating as well as its stationary territory. Then it was that America achieved her first celebrity upon the water, while upon land Wellington's heroes, fresh from their victories in the Peninsular war, evinced no superiority over the republican soldier. On the 8th day of January, 1815, the victory at New Orleans put an end to military operations, and the nation gained its important point through the persuasion of arms, although treaties were silent. Again it was the good fortune of the Republic that France was an actor in the great drama. The mighty Napoleon, if not the conqueror, was certainly the terror of Europe. In order to maintain for her own protection an equilibrium of powers, it became necessary for Great Britain, as a component part of the pan-European alliance, to hurl against Napoleon the force that otherwise would have aided her haughty usurpation in America. Except for a brief expedition against the North African powers, which infested the Mediterranean with their piracies, the United States have since been at peace with the eastern hemisphere.

With our subsequent growth and expansion, it now seems safe to predict that there will be no serious interruption of peace from a foreign source. Soldiers formidable as antagonists could come only from Europe or the British Isles. A fleet of the required capacity for aggressive warfare could hardly withstand both the fury of the waves and the attack of monitors. The Republic, although extending from ocean to ocean, is, by means of the telegraph and the railroad, much more compact than was the single State of New York at the time of the revolution. No armament could attempt to land upon our shores without meeting a superior opposing force at almost any given point. To a power thus pro-

tected from invasion annoyance may come, but danger can only arise from internal discord.

The Union has just passed through its greatest peril, and it is beyond dispute that there were months when the way was dark and the result uncertain. Since the War of 1812 the growth of the Republic had been so rapid and regular that it seemed impossible for any thing to retard its progress or endanger its permanency. In November, 1832, the mischievous spirit of disunion appeared in South Carolina. It was based upon the political heresy that the States were sovereign, and the Union simply a confederacy from which a State could withdraw at pleasure. The question as to paramount authority has now passed beyond argument, having forever been settled by the result of the war. The pretext for nullification was the tariff of 1828, which was alleged by the cotton-planters to be destructive of their interests. By the patriotism and unyielding firmness of Jackson, the disunion sentiment of South Carolina was prevented from developing into treason, but the political doctrine there taught spread throughout the South, and awaited only for strength and opportunity to sustain and legitimate itself. Discussion and legislation were soon directed to the matter of the extension or limitation of the boundaries of African slavery, an institution which the dominant race in the Southern States believed indispensable to public prosperity. It is not strange that a people accustomed to enforce implicit obedience upon their own plantations should become haughty and little disposed to brook opposition elsewhere. To maintain slavery within the borders of their own States, they desired to extend its area, and they did not hesitate to announce the doctrine that property in human flesh was the same as property in beasts of burden to be protected by

government wherever its flag should wave. The anti-slavery agitation had already commenced at the North, but there was only a moral force within narrow limits behind it. When, however, the obnoxious fugitive slave law was enacted among the compromise measures of 1850, the Abolitionists were roused to greater zeal, and those who had been willing to recognize and protect the existing institutions of the land objected to being used as instruments for returning to bondage any human being whose only offense was the love of liberty. In May, 1854, the passage of the act organizing the territories of Kansas and Nebraska, and abrogating the compromise of 1820, produced an intense excitement of the popular mind, and thoughtful men counseled immediate resistance to the encroachments of the slave power. Then came the notorious Dred Scott decision, which declared the unfortunate negro race to be without rights in a free country. Against this doctrine, ably stated by an able Chief Justice, and yet so seemingly at variance with the intention of the founders of the republic, arose the indignant protest of the entire North. On the 17th day of October, 1859, the fanatical John Brown, with twenty-one devoted followers, attacked Harper's Ferry, in the belief that the colored people would flock to his standard, and that insurrection would be followed by emancipation. The result of this raid demonstrated that there was no more danger of a servile insurrection than of the rising of the plantations themselves. The occurrence, however, was seized upon with avidity to further inflame the Southern passions, while at the North was strengthened the determination to prevent the extension of slavery over another inch of free territory. The cry of abolition as a means of embitterment had now so effectively been used throughout

the South that no concession, short of absolute surrender, could prevent an overt attempt to dissolve the Union and establish a separate government. After the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 until his inauguration in March, 1861, James Buchanan, who hesitated to crush the seeds of rebellion lest he might violate the constitution, continued to act as President, and emboldened by his timidity disloyal secretaries wielded for months a nation's power against itself. When Lincoln became President seven States had seceded, so far as their own political action could accomplish that result, and four others were about to follow their example. On the 12th day of April, 1861, the bombardment of Fort Sumter was commenced, and the opening scene of fratricidal carnage was observed with more formality than had marked the dedication of the temple of American liberty. On the 14th Sumter fell, and the next day the President issued a proclamation calling seventy-five thousand soldiers to the field. That proclamation convinced an incredulous North that rebellion actually existed, and an incredulous South that the Northern States had determined to maintain at all hazards the integrity of the Union. But the die had been cast, and sectional pride took counsel of desperation rather than of judgment. The belief up to that time had largely obtained in one section that if the South stood firm and unyielding the North would not resort to force, and in the other that the South would not commence open hostilities. Everywhere throughout the North was an abhorrence to shedding fraternal blood. A small number whose political action had been in harmony with that of Southern leaders, were reluctant to sever their pleasant relationship. Some desired to say, "Wayward sisters, depart in peace;" but the administration having

the general government in charge insisted that there should be no permanent departure from allegiance or duty in the sisterhood of States. The effect of disintegration in producing wars likely to ensue, the danger to future security and commercial prosperity from complications with adjoining States, and the degradation of a great republic from a first to a second-class power, were considerations of controlling weight. The same Union-loving spirit that sustained Jackson in 1832, caused the people to extend their strong arm to the aid of Lincoln in 1861. So at the first call for troops the great North rose almost as one man to vindicate the judgment of our forefathers in their establishment of a constitutional republic. To the assertion that Congress had no right to coerce a State, was answered from the cannon's mouth the maxim, undisputed since the days of the expelled Tarquinius, "The safety of the republic is the supreme law." Requisition after requisition was issued until at one time nearly a million names were on the muster rolls of the federal army. The blood offering was sufficiently copious to crimson a continent, and treasure poured forth in such abundance as to appall one ignorant of the value of union; yet none paused to estimate in blood or treasure the cost of victory, for liberty is priceless.

In April, 1865, by the dispersion of the chief civil officers of the confederacy, and the surrender of Lee's brave army, the rebellion was virtually crushed. In the very hour of rejoicing, and while a nation was preparing for peaceful slumber, almost the first for four long years, Abraham Lincoln fell a victim to the assassin's bullet. Few were the eyes that wept not, for the republic was bereft, and all were mourners at his tomb. He who had been president through all the rebellion; and seen its last embers wane and die; he whose

character had won the confidence, as his patriotism had the love of the people, was best qualified to heal the gaping wounds of war and mark out the delicate pathway to reconciliation. Never looking up to heraldry, nor down upon virtue, brave but gentle, wise without pedantry, firm yet tender, he was the noblest child of the republic, of which history shall record him as the savior. But he fell, the last and greatest sacrifice to a barbarous system that the war has eradicated. In a republic with an army nearly a million strong, the highest civil officer dies, but the government moves on in its appointed work without a ripple. In ancient Rome or early England, that army within a week would have proclaimed a king, an emperor, or a military dictator, and parceled out the spoils of war, and perhaps the property of the realm. Here the firmest friends of the constituted civil authority were the soldiers. Here the mighty armed force disband, without disturbance or commotion, and return to their ordinary civil vocations with so much quietude and serenity that within a month after the rebellion one would have had to learn from history that war had existed. Toward those brave men in arms a nation's gratitude should never wane. Most fitly has a day been devoted to the memory of the fallen, when pious hands, unable with garlands to deck their living brows, may strew their peaceful graves with flowers.

In the enjoyment of perfect national tranquillity, and at peace with the world, it may not be improper calmly to consider the results of the recent conflict and determine whether the benefits secured do not far outweigh the woes inflicted. Under authority given by Congress, the year 1863 opened with a proclamation by President Lincoln abolishing slavery in the disaffected territory. The effect

of this action was put beyond question by a constitutional amendment applying to all the national domain, and going into operation the 18th day of December, 1865. This soon being followed by the fourteenth amendment, four million freedmen entered upon a new life, and bowed to no superior in rights and immunities. The potent cause and sole pretext of the rebellion thus forever was removed as a disturbing element in the nation. The lesson inculcated by this new dispensation shall not be forgotten by fomenters of discord so long as history shall be read upon the earth. Property in human flesh had been recognized in the great republic last among all the powers of the enlightened globe, and monarchical Europe could point with scorn to our pretensions, and with abhorrence to our practices. To-day the sun in his circuit above us smiles upon a land oppressed by no tyrant and cursed by no slave, and the republican spirit of other lands shall take fresh courage and new hope as it points with pride to our own free country, purified as by fire and washed of its last stain. A better understanding between the different sections already exists, and the nation in its new life, unable to find even a pretext for discord, shall soon outgrow the rancor of the past. It has been fully demonstrated that a government founded upon the consent of the governed is stronger to repel invasion or quell insurrection than one sustained by arbitrary power. Every citizen here to-day has ground for the belief that this republic, since the attempted disruption, is so firmly united and cemented that nothing but the hand of God could strike it from the earth. Who then shall say that the late rebellion, notwithstanding the many precious lives that we mourn, and the enormous debt entailed, was not the one thing needful to perpetuate for all time the institutions which we cherish?

There are, nevertheless, resulting from the civil war, some evils from which full relief is yet to come. The necessities of the army created the opportunity by which shrewd speculators and avaricious agents could reap immense profits from articles of commerce. Upon the return of peace, another class, mistaking the bubble of inflation for substance, rapidly increased in wealth by the apparent rise in the value of property. Extravagance followed the possession of unaccustomed wealth, and proper style must be maintained by the less favored, even though dishonest practices be resorted to, and thus public morality deteriorated below its ancient standard. The people permitted extravagance to assume the name of enterprise, and hesitated at no recklessness of expenditure, particularly if a draft could be made upon the future; and, acting collectively in all their civil and corporate divisions, they appropriated immense sums both for works of supposed utility, and works of embellishment. Whenever the investment promised no return, the progressive preacher would say, "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." For years, the popular mind was concerned mainly with a proper reorganization of the government. The only question propounded in regard to an officer or candidate was, "Is he loyal?" The masses did not assume the rôle of detectives, and thus pretenders with a loyal shout occasionally reached positions to which modest virtue did not aspire. The wildness of the popular mind has now almost vanished. Extravagance shall yield to the depreciation which it has produced. Burdensome taxation shall make honesty and economy the political watchwords. The demoralizing evils of the last decade shall easily be corrected in the coming one.

There are some minor annoyances which extreme prudence cannot prevent. Since the colonists first trod the North American continent, the pioneers of civilization have battled with the original occupants for every inch of acquired territory. The red man, like the savage beast of the forest, flees before constitutions and laws, still contesting at every outpost the aggressions of another race. Exhibiting of all mankind the noblest and the meanest traits he elicits by turns our admiration and our contempt. The present century shall witness his extinction, as the past has his decadence. In the meanwhile, statesmen, doubtful whether to exterminate by slaughter, or subdue with kindness, will strive in vain to solve the problem of proper treatment. Schemes for the annexation of all adjacent territory shall not be wanting in able advocates. The restless spirit of every country seeks for occupation and employment. The desire, however, for a preponderance or even an equilibrium of power, for the purpose of maintaining a peculiar institution, shall no longer drive sectional leaders to advocate the conquest of neighboring states. The abolition of slavery has headed off the wars that would have been precipitated on the slightest pretext, for the annexation of Cuba, Mexico and Central America. There is now more to be apprehended from the love of military glory that animates the breast of the soldier. Every man trained to arms, and whose life can be successful only as a field is given, naturally craves an opportunity to achieve distinction in the service. The example of Alexander, and Cæsar, and Napoleon, appeals with ten-fold power to the martial spirit of the young. Too frequently ambition smothers the patriotic sentiment that self is nothing compared with country. Thus the readiness with which the republic's

brave defenders discover a national affront indicates the alacrity with which they would hurl their might against a foreign foe. But from this source, harm can scarcely arise with a reasonable watchfulness of public affairs.

Every citizen should devote some study to the science of government, and some attention to the machinery by which it is operated. The neglect to do this furnishes to the designing or pretentious politician an army of dupes. Men immersed in business spend but little time in separating from the chaff of daily assertion, the few grains of truth which it contains, thinking that they can live, if others do, when by proper action they might make it more desirable for all to live. American independence is sufficiently national, but not enough individual. The fear of disapprobation causes many to float quietly down the stream to be swallowed in impure waters, when by reasonable effort the channel could be given a proper direction. The source of that stream is too often in personal selfishness, clouded from view by hazy representations of political or financial prosperity. Independence of political associations, however, is barren of good results. The government will always be administered by one of two great political organizations, oscillating in the scale of popular strength, although names, issues and tactics may change. Herein is the beauty of the republican system, that whenever the party in power transcends the limits of good government, or is in any respect unfaithful to its trust, it yields to the quiet but irresistible force of the ballot, and without revolution or disturbance, transfers the reins of authority to other hands. Our safety consists in administration by a party accountable to the people. The equal division of a trust between antagonistic organizations destroys all political responsi-

bility, and creates a vicious system, of which the almost necessary result is barter and corruption. Every citizen should prefer that official trusts should temporarily devolve upon the party he dislikes, to the selection from his own of a dishonest agent to discharge them. It will long be a mooted question whether it is possible for honest political service and unusual personal enrichment to exist together. At the same time the tendency, and often the desire to misconstrue motives, particularly in times of political excitement, would cause any upright citizen of a sensitive nature to hesitate to be concerned with matters in which others have a common interest.

In glancing at the history of republicanism in America for a hundred years, it is indeed strange that there are so few vices or causes of apprehension to be considered. That century has been the most progressive in the world's annals. Civil and religious liberty have marched hand in hand to their present triumph. The bigotry and intolerance that marked our earlier days have given way before growing reason and a more general enlightenment. Although Church and State are absolutely divorced, government still requires that every agent should invoke the Supreme Being to witness his promise of fidelity to public trust, and a court of justice rejects truth not verified by an oath. Such is the tribute that human law pays to the divine. The elevation of the common mind above the form to the substance of religion, and the social commingling of the different sects and denominations, have made it apparent that virtue is not confined to a single class, and that no barrier is effective against hypocrisy. Man abandons the weaknesses of narrow minds, in proportion as his intellect rises and expands by general culture. There were many ripe scholars among

the revolutionary patriots, while with the masses much learning was impossible. The single volume of their period has grown into the magnificent library of to-day. The biographies of some of our ablest statesmen, who by perseverance overcame the disadvantages of their youth, indicate the slender opportunities of half a century ago. The State regards enlightened citizenship as its most reliable safeguard, and so abundant are present facilities, that a youth destitute of every thing else, can hardly escape a good elementary education at sixteen. Even in the settlement of new territory, the schoolmaster is at his post in advance of the children. But throughout the republic, the determination that an adequate system of public instruction shall be maintained, is no stronger than the determination that the school-house of the State shall not be made the theater of proselytism.

The means for rapid transmission of intelligence have undergone a marvelous change within two score years. Among all nations, civilized as well as savage, fires or contrivances of wood upon the hill-tops, had been used to signal important events. When Franklin demonstrated the identity of lightning with electricity, he probably little dreamed that the fire of the heavens would be trained to do the bidding of man, and become the closest ally of an enterprising press. The utilization of the electric current, achieved by the united genius of various scientists, although the highest honor has properly been accorded to an American, has obliterated space between correspondents. Simultaneously with the magnetic telegraph, appeared phonographic characters, which permit an instant transfer of rapid speech to an enduring record. Printing, invented over four hundred years ago, was slow and laborious in its operations until the advent of the cylinder

press in 1847. Thus the magnetic telegraph, the phonographic alphabet, and the printing press, by their combined effort, so contribute to the dispatch of news, that an ukase dictated by the Czar of all the Russians at twelve o'clock to-day, could within an hour be issued in an extra edition of our city dailies.

The application of steam to the purposes of locomotion and manufactures has principally occurred within the memory of men now living. Many were the experiments and discouragements before a light steamboat could be propelled from New York to Albany at the rate of five miles an hour, and now those who crowd the floating palaces of midsummer praise without stint the genius of Fulton. Railroads, almost strangers forty years ago, now extend seventy-five thousand miles through the length and breadth of the land. Except where falling water gives motion to a few wheels, the great dynamic efficiency of mechanical appliances is supplied by steam. There is scarcely a manufacture, including the machinery by which it is made, that is not produced by steam power. The recent improvement in agricultural implements, mostly through American invention, has increased ten-fold the availability of the soil for useful production. To a great extent, mental activity has been substituted for physical, and the laboring element has been raised from drudgery to intelligence. It is not unusual to hear among the workingmen, and upon moral, political or scientific subjects, discussions that would do credit to homes that fortune has favored. Machinery has thus taken the place of bone and sinew, and given intellect an opportunity for its development. It has enhanced the demand for labor, mitigated its hardships, elevated its sphere, and increased its remuneration. Surely the delineation of the

steps in such universal advancement cannot be expected in a brief address, when volumes would be required. Notwithstanding this rapid stride in the useful arts, the student of æsthetics, except as he pauses to consult the Italian artist of the middle ages, skips more than twenty centuries, and turns to ancient Athens for the paragons of beauty and splendor in painting, in sculpture, in poetry, and in eloquence, and it is doubtful whether the triumphs of the brilliant and polished Greek shall be surpassed in any age or clime.

In all the progress of the century, Dutchess county has furnished her full quota of genius, has cheerfully borne her allotment of the burden, and is entitled to share in the glory. Settled in the western part by the Dutch, about the close of the seventeenth century, and shortly afterward on the eastern border by scions of English stock, there was among her inhabitants a happy commixture of the best blood. From the time of the French war until the termination of the late rebellion, her soldiers performed noble and patriotic service in the field. The first missionary work among the Indians was inaugurated by the Moravians within her borders. The British, under Sir Henry Clinton, held the county for a time in 1777. In January, 1788, the Legislature of the State convened at Poughkeepsie. In June, of the same year, a convention, of which Hamilton and Jay were members, assembled at the same place to consider upon the ratification of the federal constitution. The county has furnished to the federal government a cabinet officer and a minister to France, senators in Congress and judges of the Supreme Court; to the State, a governor and lieutenant-governor, and high judicial officers; to the Church, eminent bishops; to the army, renowned generals; and to science, literature and

history, names that shall survive the race. Nowhere on the face of the globe can be found a more intelligent, honest or virtuous people. To recite a history of this county is not the purpose of to-day. It has, however, been intimated that within a brief period the request of Congress will be more than complied with by the appearance, from the pen of one of her most gifted sons, of an elaborate and complete history of the county of Dutchess.

A new era, fellow-citizens, opens with to-day! The republic reared by your ancestors is delivered to you in its full vigor and strength, and for the century its destinies are confided to your guardianship. It is yours to enjoy, yours to protect, yours to transmit. Your fathers suffered the deprivations and hardships—yours are the benefit and the glory. You have succeeded to a heritage of inestimable value. You are wealthy in that greatest of all possessions—good government. For this, the true man will sacrifice life, property—all but honor. Wars have desolated the earth to maintain political systems which have poisoned the very soil upon which they have flourished. Your system needs no standing army to protect it—it needs only the virtue of the citizen. It is the grandest scheme of self-government that the human understanding ever conceived. Authority is intrusted to those deemed worthy of it, and not to a lineage or name. No man is so powerful but that the arm of the law is more powerful than he—none so weak but that, in the vindication of his rights, he is as strong as the republic. The American mind has kept pace with the rising standard of the civil authority, and has been educated to distinguish between liberty and license, between a commonwealth and a communism. In no country does one hold by a firmer title that which he possesses,

or own less the property of another. Your national ensign, representing the independence and might of the republic, exhibits from every mast-head and from every flag-staff, a moral power that has made tyrants tremble, and monarchies more liberal throughout the world. Its height measures everywhere among the oppressed the elevation of their hopes and the strength of their courage. In the enjoyment of this vast heritage you are secure. There is, however, a desire among all to live with honor, and, passing away, to leave a good name behind. Men strive to accumulate wealth and honors, not without the hope that after-generations, enjoying them, may speak their names with praise. Every consideration, therefore, appeals to you to preserve this great trust, with its quality improved and its volume amplified, for those who may succeed you. If this grand system of government, through your vices, should fail of permanency, scarcely ten centuries could restore the freedom of to-day, as throughout Christendom would be accepted the decision that man, capable of governing others, is incompetent to govern himself. The terrible effectiveness of machinery for human destruction has caused christian statesmen to raise their voices against war. Whenever disputes involving fearful consequences shall arise, the American mind will look for a precedent rather to Geneva than to Gettysburgh. With a continuance of peace there can be scarcely a limit to progress. The Atlantic may yet be furrowed from New York to Liverpool in twice twenty-four hours. Invention may yet make it appear that the story of Dædalus, winging his way from Crete to Sicily, was less a fable than the vision of a prophet. The tide of immigration shall not cease while America presents superior inducements to labor and enterprise, and extends her broad ægis

to the fugitive from oppression. The skill of the old world is thus added to the genius of the new. A broader culture shall teach the citizen that the path of honor is in the line of duty, and civil liberty shall be so intrenched in reason, and so guarded by countless volunteers, that no ambition of warriors can subvert, no deluge of barbarism overwhelm it. So this magnificent fabric of free institutions, with all its increase of splendor, shall pass to another century, and to a later generation of your descendants, with the blessings of a hundred years clustering around your memories.



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